

Statement on the Awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo *December 10, 2010*

One year ago, I was humbled to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, an award that speaks to our highest aspirations and that has been claimed by giants of history and courageous advocates who have sacrificed for freedom and justice. Mr. Liu Xiaobo is far more deserving of this award than I was.

All of us have a responsibility to build a just peace that recognizes the inherent rights and dignity of human beings, a truth upheld within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In our own lives, our own countries, and in the world, the pursuit of a just peace remains incomplete, even as we strive for progress. This past year saw the release of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, even as the Burmese people continue to be denied the democracy that they deserve. Nobel laureate Jose Ramos-Horta has continued his tireless work to build a free and prosperous East Timor, having made the transition from dissident to President. And this past year saw the retirement of Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu, whose own career demonstrates

the universal power of freedom and justice to overcome extraordinary obstacles.

The rights of human beings are universal; they do not belong to one nation, region, or faith. America respects the unique culture and traditions of different countries. We respect China's extraordinary accomplishment in lifting millions out of poverty and believe that human rights include the dignity that comes with freedom from want. But Mr. Liu reminds us that human dignity also depends upon the advance of democracy, open society, and the rule of law. The values he espouses are universal, his struggle is peaceful, and he should be released as soon as possible. I regret that Mr. Liu and his wife were denied the opportunity to attend the ceremony that Michelle and I attended last year. Today, on what is also International Human Rights Day, we should redouble our efforts to advance universal values for all human beings.

NOTE: The statement referred to Liu Xia, wife of Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo.

Statement on United States Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard C. Holbrooke *December 10, 2010*

Earlier today I spoke to Richard Holbrooke's wife Kati and told her that Michelle and I are praying for Richard. Richard Holbrooke is a towering figure in American foreign policy, a critical member of my Afghanistan and Pakistan team, and a tireless public servant who has won the admiration of the American people and people around the world. I know that Secretary Clinton, Admiral Mullen, Tom Donilon, and

other members of our team have been with him at George Washington hospital, and we continue to pray for his recovery and support his family in this difficult time.

NOTE: The statement referred to Kati Marton, wife of Ambassador Holbrooke; and National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon.

The President's Weekly Address *December 11, 2010*

Right now there's a big debate taking place in Washington that'll affect how much you pay in taxes next year. If Congress doesn't act, tax rates

will automatically go up for just about everyone in our country. Typical middle class families would end up paying an extra \$3,000.

That's unacceptable to me. Not when we know that it's the middle class that was hit the hardest by the recession. And not when we know that taking this money out of the pockets of working people is exactly the wrong thing to do to get our economy growing faster. Economists tell us that this tax hike on working families would actually cost us well over a million jobs.

That's why I've been fighting so hard to cut middle class taxes. And that's why I brought both Democrats and Republicans to the table, to put together a compromise and work through our differences so we could get this done.

Now, the Republicans in Congress strongly favored permanent tax breaks for the wealthiest taxpayers and the wealthiest estates, most of which would go to millionaires and even billionaires. I didn't believe that these tax cuts were worth the cost. They'd add to our deficits without really boosting the economy.

I believed instead that the best way to help the economy and working families was to keep middle class tax rates low and cut taxes for working parents, college students, and small businesses. And I believed that with millions of people looking for jobs, it would be a terrible mistake to end unemployment insurance, not only for people who are out of work, but for our entire economy.

So we hammered out a deal that reflects ideas from both sides. It wasn't easy, and it's by no means perfect. And as with any compromise, everybody had to live with elements they didn't like. But this is a good deal for the American people. The vast majority of the tax cuts in this plan will help the middle class, including a new tax cut in payroll taxes that will save the average family about a thousand dollars. And as this plan is debated in Congress, what I want to make clear is the real difference it will make in people's lives.

It's going to make a difference for a single mom with two kids in Ohio working as a cashier. With this plan, she'd get a new payroll tax cut and a bigger child tax credit together worth more than \$2,300.

It's going to make a difference for a couple in Florida earning about \$50,000 and trying to put

one of their two kids through college. They'd save more than \$4,000 because of the middle class tax cuts, including a \$2,500 tax credit to go toward college tuition.

And it's going to make an enormous difference for people looking for work. For many of these families, emergency unemployment insurance is the last line of defense between hardship and catastrophe. And I'd point out, if these folks stop spending money, it will also hurt businesses, which will hurt hiring, which will damage our economy.

So this plan is going to help millions of families to make ends meet because of tax cuts and unemployment insurance for people who've lost their jobs by no fault of their own. And we included tax relief for businesses too, making it easier for them to invest and expand. All told, this will not only directly help families and businesses. By putting more money in people's pockets and helping companies grow, we're going to see people being able to spend a little more, we're going to spur hiring, we're going to strengthen our entire economy.

Now, I recognize that many of my friends in my own party are uncomfortable with some of what's in this agreement, in particular the temporary tax cuts for the wealthy. I share their concerns. I don't like those tax cuts either. It's clear that over the long run, if we're serious about balancing the budget, we cannot continue to afford these tax breaks for the wealthiest taxpayers, especially when we know that cutting the deficit is going to demand sacrifice from everyone. That's the reality.

But at the same time, we can't allow the middle class in this country to be caught in the political crossfire of Washington. People want us to find solutions, not score points. And I will not allow middle class families to be treated like pawns on a chessboard.

The opportunity for families to send their kids to college hinges on this debate. The ability of parents to put food on the table while looking for a job depends on this debate. And our recovery will be strengthened or weakened based on the choice that now rests with Congress.

So I strongly urge members of both parties to pass this plan. And I'm confident that they will

do the right thing, strengthening the middle class and our economic recovery.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:40 p.m. on December 10 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on De-

cember 11. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 10, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 11. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at “Christmas in Washington” December 12, 2010

Thank you, everybody. Please, please have a seat. Merry Christmas and happy holidays, everybody. I want to thank our wonderful host, Ellen DeGeneres, for being here tonight. And of course, a special thanks to all of tonight’s extraordinary performers: Mariah Carey, Andrea Bocelli, Miranda Cosgrove, Annie Lennox, Maxwell, Matthew Morrison, the Washington Youth Choir, the American Family Choir, and the United States Army Band Herald Trumpets. Please give them a huge round of applause.

What a wonderful show here at the National Building Museum. And we’re grateful that the Children’s National Medical Center is the beneficiary of tonight’s performance. Day in and day out, the folks there are saving lives and bringing healing and comfort to our children.

This season reminds us that more than 2,000 years ago, a child born in a stable brought our world a redeeming gift of peace and salvation. It’s a story with a message that speaks to us to this day—that we are called to love each other as we love ourselves, that we are our brother’s keeper and our sister’s keeper and our destinies are linked.

It’s a message that guides my Christian faith, and it focuses us as we think about all those whose holidays may be a bit tougher this year. We pray for our troops serving far away from the warmth of family and homespun traditions. We remember those who are out of work or struggling just to get by. We hold in our hearts all those who’ve fallen on hard times this holiday season.

Because, while Christmas is a time to celebrate, a time to sing chorals and exchange gifts, it’s also something more. It’s a time to rediscover the meaning of words like “charity” and “compassion” and “good will,” to do our part for our neighbors, to serve God through serving others. So from our family to yours, happy holidays, everybody. Merry Christmas, and God bless you all, and God bless the United States of America.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 6 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to comedian and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 13.

Remarks on Signing the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 December 13, 2010

The President. Thank you, everybody. Please, please have a seat. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Well, I want to thank all the students and faculty and staff here at Tubman Elementary for hosting us today at your beautiful school. And we want to thank Principal Harry Hughes for doing outstanding work here.

Thank you. Give them all a big round of applause.

We are thrilled to be here with all of you as I sign the healthy, hungry-free kids act, a bill that’s vitally important to the health and welfare of our kids and to our country. But before I do this, I just want to acknowledge a few of the folks who are here, as well as a few who are not